

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated July 23, 2009. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

By the above amendment, claims 1, 2 and 8 are amended. Thus, claims 1-8 are currently pending in the present application. Claim 1 is amended to more clearly recite the structure of the brush elements having the U-shaped tip portion. Claims 2 and 8 are amended to correct minor informalities.

Initially, Applicant's undersigned representative would like to thank the Examiner for agreeing to discuss the merits of the present application in a telephone conference on October 23, 2009. The courteous and helpful manner in which the Examiner conducted the telephone interview is sincerely appreciated.

During the telephone conference, the Examiner explained that claim 1 did not clearly recite that the second plurality of brush elements were formed by adjacent brush elements connected at their ends. However, the Examiner did agree that claim 8 requires two adjacent brush elements connected at their ends to form a U-shape tip portion. Claim 8 has been amended to provide clear antecedent basis for the brush elements recited in the last paragraph. The Examiner agreed that claim 8 distinguished over the applied Yuyama reference, and that claim 1 would also define over the applied Yuyama reference if amended to clearly recite that the second plurality of brush elements are formed by adjacent brush elements that are connected at their ends to form U-shaped tip portions.

Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended to require, *inter alia*, wherein a first plurality of

the brush elements located at an end of the partitioning portion are linear members and a second plurality of the brush elements have a U-shape formed by connecting ends of two adjacent brush elements so as to provide a rounded tip portion. Thus, the second plurality of brush elements include two brush element connected at their ends to provide a rounded tip portion.

Yuyama (U.S. Patent No. 5,803,309) discloses a partitioning member 14 comprising a partitioning portion 15 formed from a plurality of elastic bristles 17 that are tilted in a downstream direction and project in a comb-like shape. However, the brush elements disclosed in the Yuyama reference are linear members none of which are connected at their ends to form a rounded tip portion. Clearly, the Yuyama partitioning member does not disclose nor suggest two adjacent elements connected so as to have a U-shape providing a rounded tip portion. Since the Yuyama reference does not meet each and every limitation of claim 1 or claim 8, these claims cannot be anticipated under 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

Further, a second Yuyama reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,394,308) was discussed at the interview. This reference has not been applied in a rejection of the pending claims. However, it is noted that this reference discloses a partitioning member 7 having whisker-like resilient members 7a planted in a support arm 7b (see Fig. 2). The members 7a are linear, and are clearly not connected at their ends to form U-shaped tip portions.

Claims 2-7 depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1, and are therefore allowable at least by virtue of their dependencies.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to enter the above amendment and pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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